

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 1752

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, EC
SUBJECT: THE COMMUNIST LEFT LAUNCHES ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ON MARCH 17 CAMILO MENA, RECTOR OF QUITO'S CENTRAL UNIVERSITY, BECAME THE SIXTH OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. HE WAS NOMINATED BY THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MPD) WHICH IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS A CREATION OF THE CHINESE LINE OF THE ECUADOREAN COMMUNIST PARTY. MENA'S NOMINATION SEEMS LIKELY TO PROVOKE THE SOVIET-LINE TO ADVANCE A CANDIDATE. SUCH CANDIDACIES WILL ALLOW FOR A TEST OF THE EXTREME LEFT'S ELECTORAL POSER (GENERALLY REGARDED AS INSIGNIFICANT) AND BROADEN THE ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO THE ECUADOREAN ELECTORATE. END SUMMARY.

2. CAMILO MENA MENA, RECTOR OF QUITO'S CENTRAL UNIVERSITY, BECAME ECUADOR'S SIXTH OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE UPON BEING NOMINATED BY THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MPD) IN QUITO MARCH 17. THE MPD IS POPULARLY BELIEVED TO BE A FRONT CREATED BY THE CHINESE-LINE OF THE ECUADOREAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE/ML). MENA WAS ELECTED RECTOR BY SUPPORT FROM THAT FACTION.

3. IN ACCEPTING THE NOMINATION MENA, WHO IS ON TEMPORARY
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LEAVE FROM THE UNIVERSITY, DECLARED THAT HE WAS A "MAN OF THE LEFT" BUT DENIED BEING A MARXIST-LENINIST OR THAT THE MPD WAS CHINESE-LINE COMMUNIST. HE ADDED THAT THE MPD IS A MOVEMENT OF THE LEFT, BUT NOT OF THE EXTREME LEFT, THAT WILL SEEK FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE PRESENT SOCIAL STRUCTURE BUT NOT ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE A DICTATORSHIP ON THE PROLETARIAT.

4. NOMINATED AS MENA'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE WAS JAIME HURTADO GONZALEZ, A BLACK LAWYER FROM ESMERALDAS. HURTADO, WHO IS ECUADOR'S FIRST BLACK ASPIRANT FOR HIGH EXECUTIVE OFFICE, IS REPORTEDLY OF THE SAME IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION AS MENA.

5. COMMENT: MENA'S POLITICAL ACTIVITY HAS CAUSED A STRONG REACTION AMONG THE SOVIET-LINE COMMUNISTS AT CENTRAL UNIVERSITY AND HIS DENIAL OF HIS CONNECTION WITH THE CHINESE-LINE WILL LIKELY CONVINCE VERY FEW. HIS NOMINATION BY THE MPD SEEMS CERTAIN TO OBLIGE THE BROAD FRONT OF THE LEFT (FADI), WHICH INCLUDES THE SOVIET-LINE COMMUNISTS AND THE CUBA-LINE ECUADOREAN REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY (PSRE), TO RUN ITS OWN TICKET, THOUGH MENA HAS MADE CONCILIATORY NOISES INDICATING HE WOULD LIKE TO HEAD A UNITED EFFORT OF THE FAR LEFT.

6. THE MOST URGENT QUESTION FOR THE MPD WOULD APPEAR TO BE OBTAINING THE NEARLY 30,000 SIGNATURES IT NEEDS TO OFFICIALLY QUALIFY AS A PARTY. MENA ANNOUNCED MARCH 17 THAT THE SIGNATURES WERE IN HAND, THOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHERE THEY WOULD COME FROM. MENA'S FACTION ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS DOES HAVE THE CAPACITY TO COERCE SIGNATURES FROM A LARGE NUMBER OF APOLITICAL STUDENTS THROUGH IMPLICIT THREATS OF VIOLENCE. IF FADI CHOOSES
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TO NAME A TICKET, IT CAN RUN UNDER THE NAME OF POPULAR DEMOCRATIC UNION (UDP), A PRESENTLY INACTIVE THOUGH REGISTERED PARTY THAT HAS SERVED AS A FRONT FOR THE SOVIET-LINE COMMUNIST PARTY.

7. GIVEN THE ALMOST CERTAIN LOW VOTE FOR THE EXTREME LEFT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE MPD CHOOSES TO ADVANCE A CANDIDATE. PERHAPS THE DECISION STEMS FROM THE SHARP RIVALRIES BETWEEN THE SOVIET AND CHINESE LINES OR BECAUSE OF A DESIRE TO LEGALIZE THEIR ELECTORAL STATUS TO MAKE POSSIBLE CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATION. WHATEVER THE REAL MOTIVATION, THE VOTE FOR THE MPD AND LIKELY FADI CANDIDATE WILL BROADEN THE IDEOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO THE ECUADOREAN VOTER JULY 16 AND ALLOW FOR A REAL MEASURE OF THE ELECTORAL STRENGTH OF THE EXTREME LEFT, UNTIL NOW GENERALLY REGARDED AS NEGLIGIBLE.
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